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Money sought to catch more spies

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WASHINGTON — Too many U.S. officials hold too many secrets too loosely, according to a pessimistic congressional report released Tuesday on the nation's ability to fend off spies.

Sen. Dave Durenberger, R-Minn., chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which produced the 141-page study, deplored what he termed a "totally abysmal record" of protecting government and industrial secrets. These losses, he said, already had cost the United States "billions."

Durenberger wants the annual U.S. counter-espionage budget increased by at least $500 million and a central authority created to manage spy-stopping efforts. They now are carried out by the FBI in the United States, the CIA abroad and any of a half-dozen military security agencies when defense secrets are involved.

Durenberger said he supported the purchase of $1.2 billion worth of "scrambler" phones for U.S. officials over several years and a high cost-of-living allowance for the 400 FBI agents assigned to counter-espionage duties in New York City.

The Intelligence Committee report also calls for "many more" rechecks of personnel cleared for secrets, with tougher background probing, including a credit check.

To the traditional Warsaw Pact counter-intelligence targets, the Intelligence Committee would add such nations as Israel and China, each involved in recent spying episodes.

Defense Intelligence Agency personnel would be stationed for the first time inside the operations of defense contractors, and security-sensitive civilian satellite communications would be scrambled.

Banks should be required to turn over records to the FBI without a court order in counter-espionage cases, subject to "a framework of attorney general guidelines and congressional oversight," the committee recommends. Disclosure of telephone records also would be required and searches permitted without warrants.

For the first time, Senate personnel with security clearances would be required to report contacts with known or suspected foreign agents.

In addition to the Intelligence Committee's measures, a planned five-year, $44 billion State Department security upgrade of embassies abroad includes numerous new measures to defeat spies, Durenberger said.

The committee's recommendations, produced in co-operation with counter-espionage agencies, are likely to encounter little resistance in a Congress alarmed by what Durenberger and others have called "The Year of the Spy." Between 1984 and 1986, according to the report, 25 people were convicted of espionage charges. Durenberger said that a classified package of administration legislation would be introduced next week to carry out the proposed changes.

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